المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان

PCHR

# POVERTY in PALESTINE

## Nonstop Upward Indicator

A report on Repercussions of Non-Payment of Social Affairs Dues on Humanitarian Conditions of the Poor in Palestine

April 2022

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## Introduction

The abjectly poor in Palestine live in difficult conditions due to the deterioration of their humanitarian conditions as thousands of them are deprived of their most basic rights: social protection, which is guaranteed by the Palestinian Basic Law (PBL) and the relevant international conventions on the eradication of poverty. Despite having assistance programs supervised by governmental and non-governmental bodies, the poor's conditions have not changed due to continuously marginalizing them at the official level in terms of the development plans aimed at eradicating poverty and linking the assistance provided to them with international funding, thus denying them to live in dignity.

This report addresses the repercussions of late or unpaid disbursement of social affairs dues "Cash Transfer Program" (CTP) on the humanitarian conditions of the poor in Palestine. The report also documents the unprecedented deterioration of the poor people's conditions as they live the lowest standard of living and have become unable to meet their basic needs to live in dignity. The report includes affidavits of Palestinian households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip narrating in detail their suffering due to the CTP suspension and its impact on their living conditions.

The report also reviews the poor's statistics in Palestine by indicating that nearly third of the population (29.2%) in Palestine lives in poverty as the poverty rate in the Gaza Strip is 53% that is four times more than the West Bank where the poverty rate is (13.9%.) The report also addresses the variation of the poor's living conditions: third of the Gaza Strip population lives in abject poverty (33.7%) compared to (5.8%) in the West Bank. Moreover, the food insecurity rates increased in Palestine to 32.7% and increased as well in the Gaza Strip to 68.5% in light of the deteriorating economic conditions.

The report shows the number of CTP beneficiary families in Palestine and the criteria used to select these beneficiaries as well as the extent to which the CTP can absorb new beneficiaries in light of the increasing poverty rate triggered by the deterioration of the economic situation in Palestine in addition to the mechanism used to determine the amount of financial support to the beneficiary families. According to the report, the number of families benefiting from the CTP is 115,000 of 610,000 persons, with Gaza having the biggest share of the CTP beneficiaries recording around 69% as the poverty rate in the Gaza Strip is higher than the West Bank.

The report emphasizes that depriving the poor families in Palestine, particularly the CTP beneficiaries, of their financial dues violates the 2003 amended PBL and other Palestinian laws such as the Palestinian Disability law No. 4 of 1999 and amended Palestinian Child Law No. 7 of 2004.

According to the report, the ongoing non-disbursement of the poor's dues violates Palestine's obligations under international conventions, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The report concludes with recommendations, most notably demanding the government to urgently disburse the social affairs "CTP" dues to beneficiaries, including the accrued payments and to fully adhere to fixed disbursement dates very three months as decided by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) and known for all beneficiaries. The report also calls for the repatriation of the CTP by listing it on the Palestinian Government's annual general budget and not linking it with the international donors' funds.

## i. Poverty in Palestine

The humanitarian conditions of the poor Palestinians deteriorated during the past years, and the poverty rates unprecedentedly increased among the vulnerable groups, including patients, women, elderlies, persons with disabilities, children, and others. The poverty in Palestine is profoundly correlated with the Israeli occupation's policy that has pauperized the Palestinians and controlled their resources and capabilities through a series of measures, including destroying the Palestinian economic infrastructure, imposing an unjust closure on the Gaza Strip for 15 years, and weakening the economy and capabilities of the West Bank. Meanwhile, the Palestinian government failed to eradicate or alleviate poverty due to many reasons, most significantly the ongoing financial crisis of the Palestinian Authority due to the declining international funding and paying greater attention to the security sector more than social, health and education sectors. Moreover, the political division contributed to hindering development plans and worsening the Palestinians' living conditions, particularly in the Gaza strip, where unemployment is widespread, and rates of poverty and food insecurity increased. The ongoing unemployment crisis and income disruption among thousands of Palestinian families extended the poverty cycle in Palestine as the unemployment rate is 47% in the Gaza Strip and 16% in the West Bank, where Bethlehem recorded the highest rate of 25% followed by 19% in Jenin and Hebron for each while Jerusalem recorded the lowest unemployment rate (4%). Meanwhile, Deir al-Balah recorded the highest unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip (53%) followed by Khan Younis (51%) and the northern Gaza governorate recorded the lowest unemployment rate (38%).[1]

The gap in the minimum monthly wage rate remains high between the West Bank and Gaza Strip; 655 NIS in the Gaza Strip compared with 1,098 NIS in the West Bank, i.e., Less than the legally stipulated minimum wage of 1880 shekels. Also, 81% of the employees in the private sector receives a monthly wage less than the minimum wage in the Gaza Strip while the percentage is around 7% in the West Bank. All the mentioned economic changes and events increase poverty rates in Palestine that are on the rise due to the economic deterioration, depriving thousands of Palestinians of their economic and social rights and decent livelihoods.[2]

## 1. Increasing Poverty Rate in Palestine

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) results revealed a rise on the poverty rates in Palestine as it reached 29.2% among the total population comparing with 25.7% in 2011. Meanwhile, the incidence of deep poverty increased from 12.7% to 16.8%; this means the gap

[1] Press Release on the Results of the Labor Force Survey, 2021, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 15 February2022
https://pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4177
[2] Ibid
https://pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4177

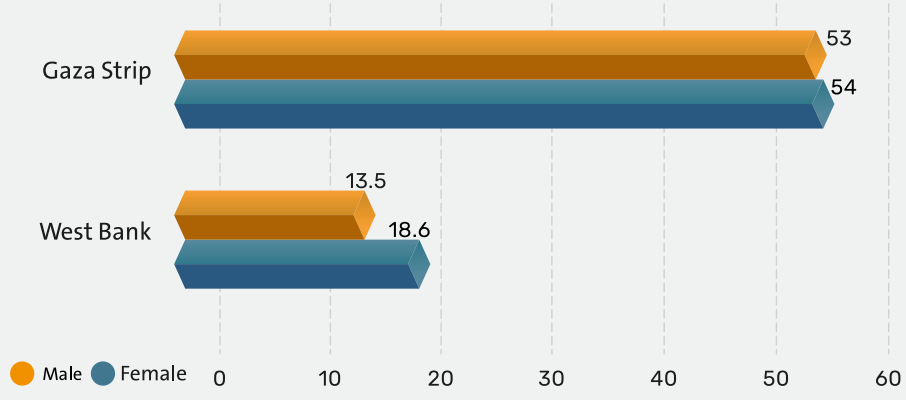
and severity of poverty increased among the poor.[3] The Statistics show an increase in poverty rates during the past years due to the rise on the poverty indicators in the Gaza Strip despite the decrease in the West Bank as the poverty rate for Gaza Strip (53%) was more than four times higher than of the West Bank rate of 13.9 percent. The figures indicate the variety in the living conditions of the individuals suffering from deep poverty* as around one third of the Gaza Strip population (33.7%) were suffering from deep poverty compared with 5.8% of the West Bank population.[4]

Table 1: Poverty Rates among Population in Palestine according to the area

| Area | Poverty rate | Poverty gap | Severity of Poverty | Deep Poverty |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gaza Strip | 53.0% | 15.7% | 6.5% | 33.7% |
| West Bank | 13.9% | 2.8% | 0.9% | 5.8% |
| Total | 29.2% | 7.9% | 3.1% | 16.8% |

PCBS, 2017

The household size mainly affects the likelihood of being poor as poverty rates for individuals in large households are significantly higher. Gender of the household headship plays a key role in the poverty rates as poverty rates among female-headed households stood at 30.6 percent compared to 29.2 percent among the male-headed households, according to the PCBS. Also, place of residence is among the reasons that contributes to differences in poverty rates in Palestine as the poverty rate among refugee camps is the highest (38.1) compared with (24.4%) in urban areas and 13.9% in rural areas. Moreover, poverty rate among refugee households is 31%, which a high rate comparing with non-refugee households who live in poverty (18.9%.)[5]




[3] "Poverty Profile in Palestine, 2017" Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Document/pdf/txte_poverty2017.pdf?date=16_4_2018_2#:~:text=About%20one%20out%20of%20three,Bank%20rate%20of%2013.9%20percent

* Deep poverty means families who are unable to meet the minimum required for food, clothing, and housing.

[4] "Multi-Dimensional Poverty Profile in Palestine, 2017 Main Results," Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: https://mppn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/book2524-Palestine-28-48.pdf

[5] Ibid: https://mppn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/book2524-Palestine-28-48.pdf

Table (02): Poverty rate among Individuals in the Palestinian Governorates:

| Poverty Rate | Governorate |
|---|---|
| 11.4% | Jenin |
| 15.5% | Tubas |
| 15.5% | Tulkarm |
| 16.6% | Nablus |
| 20.7% | Qalqilya |
| 14.1% | Salfit |
| 9.7% | Ramallah and al-Bireh |
| 15.7% | Jericho |
| 9.4% | Bethlehem |
| 20.3% | Hebron |
| 13.9% | West Bank |
| 51.2% | Northern Gaza |
| 51.6% | Gaza |
| 55.6% | Dair Al Balah |
| 54.2% | Khan Younis |
| 55.7% | Rafah |
| 53% | Gaza strip |
| **29.2%** | **Palestine** |

PCBS

In Palestine, the poverty concept went through 2 stages to deal with it in terms of statistics and the mechanism to analyze and process them and then moving to intervention and treating poverty causes. The first stage was based on the monetary definition of poverty that was developed in 1997 and is based on a budget of basic needs for a reference household.[6] In a new stage, PCBS applied the multi-dimensional poverty concept in 2020 based on its latest statistical survey as the poverty concept moved to a wider scope "multi-dimensional" that would enhance the social, economic, and cultural rights of poor households. This concept is comprised of monetary and non-monetary aspects and examines each person's deprivations across 10 indicators in three equally weighted dimensions—health (2 indicators), education (2 indicators), and standard of living (6 indicators) and offers a high-resolution lens to identify both who is poor and how they are poor.[7]

[6] "Multi-Dimensional Poverty Profile in Palestine, 2017 Main Results," Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: https://mppn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/book2524-Palestine-28-48.pdf

[7] Global MPI 2020 – Charting pathways out of multidimensional poverty: Achieving the SDGs: https://ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/G-MPI_Report_2020_Charting_Pathways.pdf

The legal definition of the multi-dimensional poverty index is based on the articles found in the Palestinian Basic Law and selects dimensions stipulated in the Palestinian Child Law, labor laws, Palestinian Disability Law and other laws that guarantee individuals' social, economic, cultural, and political rights in Palestine. Adopting the "multi-dimensional poverty" concept in Palestine is a new challenge for the successive Palestinian Governments on their way to combat poverty and its causes and to achieve sustainable development in light of many obstacles, most prominently IOF's policies and ongoing Palestinian political division.

Table (03): Multi-Dimensional Poverty Rate by Region

| Region | *Headcount | **Intensity |
|---|---|---|
| Palestine | 24% | 42.4% |
| West Bank | 10.6% | 40% |
| Northern West Bank | 10.5% | 40.6% |
| Central West Bank | 7.3% | 38.1% |
| Southern West Bank | 13.6% | 40.4% |
| Gaza Strip | 44.7% | 43.3% |
| Northern and Central Gaza Strip | 47.8% | 44.6% |
| Southern Gaza Strip | 40.9% | 41.5% |

PCBS

## 2. Poverty in the Gaza Strip

The humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip continue to deteriorate rapidly after all productive sectors, basic social services and infrastructure dramatically fell off due to the Israeli-imposed closure for 15 years and four widescale military offensives on the Gaza Strip; during which, IOF intended to destroy the economic facilities and undermine their work. The Israeli occupation authorities continued to impose restrictions on the Gaza imports and exports, increasing the unemployment rate among the population who practices fishing, agriculture, construction works and other industries which deteriorated due to the ongoing closure. All of this has perpetuated individuals' economic crises as 53% of the Gaza strip population live in poverty while 68.5%[8] is food insecure, with the share of severely food insecure households reaching 40.6% and moderately food insecure households facing difficulties in achieving adequate food consumption levels, in terms of quantity and quality, recording 23.6%.[9]

* Poverity headcount which is the proportion of people who have been identified as multidimensionally poor in the population

**Poverty Intensity which is the average share of weighted indicators in which poor people are deprived. This entails adding up the deprivation scores of the poor and dividing them by the total number of poor people.

[8]WFP Palestine Country Brief September 2021:
https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000132703/download/?_ga=2.105884995.1982440217.1646550041-1455307423.1643703786

[9] Palestine Economic Policy Instiute- MAS 2022:Food Security (SEFSEC) (mas.ps)

Before the outbreak of Covid-19, around one third of the Gaza Strip population lived in poverty and were unable to meet their basic needs, and with the outbreak of the virus in the Gaza Strip, the economic conditions of the people living in the Gaza Strip deteriorated due to the restrictions imposed to curb the outbreak of the coronavirus. Many productive, economic, industrial and crafts sectors suspended operations or intermittently minimized their economic activity over the past two years, affecting at least 160,000 workers who were let go permanently or temporarily. As a result, workers' living conditions exacerbated and they have become unable to meet their basic needs.

According to MoSD's statistics in the Gaza Strip, 1,442,599 persons in the Gaza Strip live in poverty and are unable to meet their basic needs, and only 79,629 families of 473,838 persons benefit from the CTP, i.e., 21% of the Gaza strip population. The CTP beneficiaries mainly rely on the limited payments they receive to run their daily life as each family receives monthly a payment of 250 NIS (57 USD) to 600 NIS (190 USD). These payments are determined through the Proxy Means Test Formula (PMTF), which examines an individual's need to benefit from the CTP according to approved criteria. The MoSD disburses four payments for the beneficiaries throughout the year and the quarterly financial transfer allocated for the Gaza Strip reaches around 105 million shekels (around 32 million dollars.)[10]

Moreover, 17170 poor families are waiting their turn on the waiting list to benefit from the CTP due to funding shortages, according to the MoSD in Gaza.

Table (04): CTP Waiting Lists by Governorate in Gaza Strip

| Governorate | Northern Gaza | Gaza | Central Gaza Strip | Khan Younis | Rafah | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Waiting Lists | 2831 | 5454 | 2457 | 4416 | 2012 | 17170 |

MoSD

## Suffering of Sick and Poor Person not Benefiting from CTP

**Gh. 'A (39), married and supporting 5 children, lives in al-Naser neighborhood in Gaza City. He said to PCHR's Fieldworker that:**

"I live in a rented apartment, and because I have suffered an intervertebral disc for 2 years, I cannot work to earn a living and support my family. Also, my wife suffers from epilepsy and regularly needs medications; some of which are not available at the governmental hospitals' pharmacies. I constantly search for a job that suits my health condition, but in vain. I registered at the MoSD to benefit from the CTP as I live in difficult living conditions and have accumulated debts, making me unable to meet my family's daily needs. Every time I go to the MoSD, they tell

[10] An interview conducted by PCHR's fieldworker with Loay al-Madhoun, MoSD's Commissioner General in Southern Governorates, 22 February 2022

me I am on the waiting lists and will benefit from the payments on funding availability to raise the number of beneficiaries. I resorted to relief organizations and zakat committees so that my children would not have to work in jobs not appropriate to their age. I depend for my livelihood on the UNRWA voucher, which provides basic food assistance every three months. I hope that my name will be included to benefit from the social affairs program in order to alleviate our difficult living conditions."

## ii. Cash Transfer Program "Social Affairs Dues"

The program aims to enhance the capability of poor families to meet their basic needs: the families below the deep poverty* line and the marginalized families between the absolute and deep poverty lines particularly families with persons with disabilities, elderlies, orphans, persons with chronic diseases or women-headed families. The program is mainly funded by the European Union (EU), the World Bank and the Palestinian Authority (PA.) as the EU and World Bank pays around 47% of the total funds while the PA bears 53%.[11]

## 1. CTP Statistics for the Palestinian Poor

The number of families benefiting from the CTP is 115,000 of 610,000 persons, with Gaza having the biggest share of the CTP beneficiaries recording around 69.3% of the total percentage as the poverty rate in the Gaza Strip is higher than the West Bank, where it recorded 30.7%.

Table (05): CTP Beneficiaries (Families and Individuals) Distributed by area

| Area | Number of individuals | Individuals Percentage | Number of Families | Families Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gaza Strip | 471523 | 77.3% | 79269 | 69.3% |
| West Bank | 138599 | 22.7% | 35130 | 30.7% |
| Total | 610122 | 100% | 114399 | 100% |

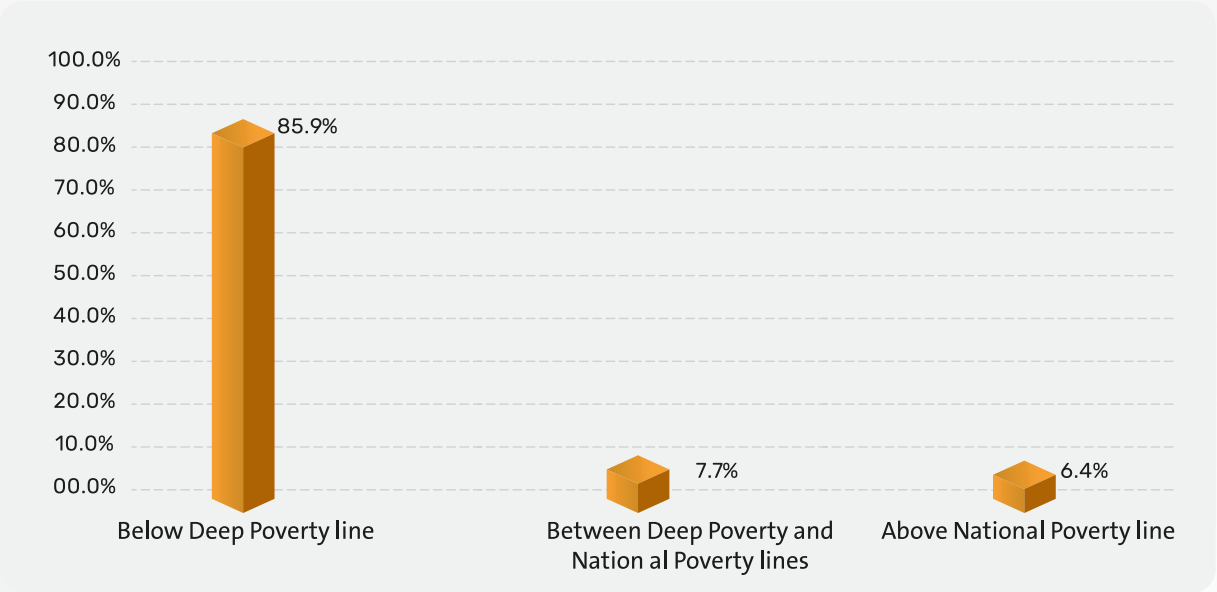
MoSD

[11] Cash Transfer Program, MoSD Website:
https://www.mosa.pna.ps/ar/content/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9

* Deep Poverty: not being able to meet the basic needs of life, including food, clothing, and housing: around 1970 shekels per month for a family of 2 adults and 3 children by 2017.

** National Poverty line: meeting the basic needs along with other needs such as health, education, and other rights: around 2470 shekels monthly for a family of 2 adults and 3 children.

Families below deep poverty line constitute around 86% of the total CTP beneficiaries, i.e., 98,292 families while the number of beneficiary families between the deep poverty and national poverty lines** is 8,764. The Statistics show that the number of CTP beneficiary families above the national poverty line is 7343.[12]




Through CTP, MoSD targets 77% of the total families below deep poverty line in Palestine and 50% of the families under national poverty line.[13]

Statistics indicate that around 54% of the CTP beneficiary families live in the cities, 25% of them live in the villages and 21% of the live in refugee camps. This is unlike what is expected as the PCBS' statistics showed that poverty rates are higher in the Palestinian refugee camps, indicating a large gap in CTP's coverage of the refugee category. Gaza City benefits the most in terms of the number of beneficiary families (around 230,000) while the least number of beneficiary families was in Jericho (only 974.)

[12] MoSD, 2020 annual statistical report: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zcfPSmrmDKzYDBPYcGlUxrIe5olPG0eK/view?fbclid=IwAR19oZ9twPVkwRAyBFlj8Ju-SBkIDwrSQBsxSSgeL0EKkxoGngYlAHe01NI

[13] Ibid, MoSD's 2020 annual statistical report

Shape (03): Percentage of CTP families according to locality type, 2020

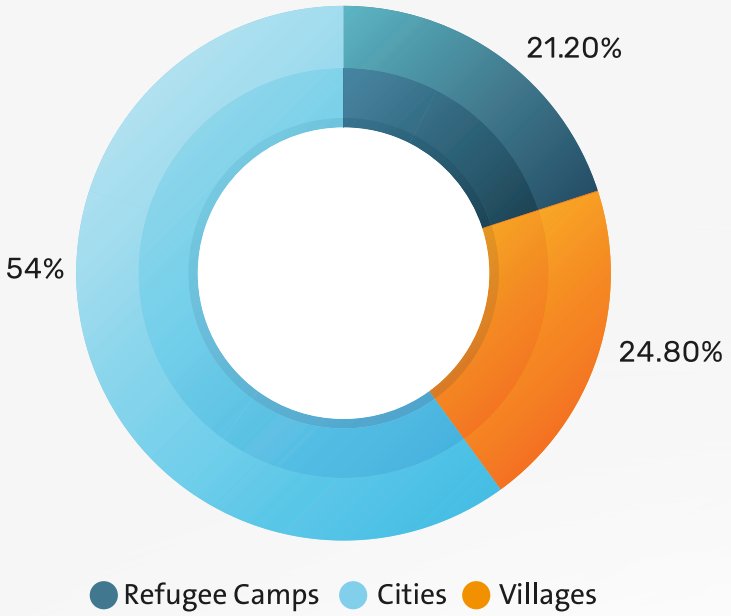



Table (06): CTP Families Distributed by Palestinian Governorate 2020

| City | Number of Beneficiaries | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Gaza | 22749 | 19.9% |
| Northern Gaza | 14798 | 12.9% |
| Dair Al Balah | 12495 | 10.9% |
| Khan Younis | 16868 | 14.7% |
| Rafah | 12359 | 10.8% |
| Hebron | 5406 | 4.7% |
| Bethlehem | 3691 | 3.2% |
| Nablus | 3773 | 3.3% |
| Jenin | 4611 | 4.0% |
| Tulkarm | 3560 | 3.1% |
| Jericho | 974 | 0.9% |
| Ramallah and al-Bireh | 2604 | 2.3% |
| Qalqilya | 2267 | 2.0% |
| Salfit | 1026 | 0.9% |
| Jerusalem | 2697 | 2.4% |
| Yatta | 3218 | 2.8% |
| Tubas | 1303 | 1.1% |
| **Total** | **114399** | **100%** |

MoSD

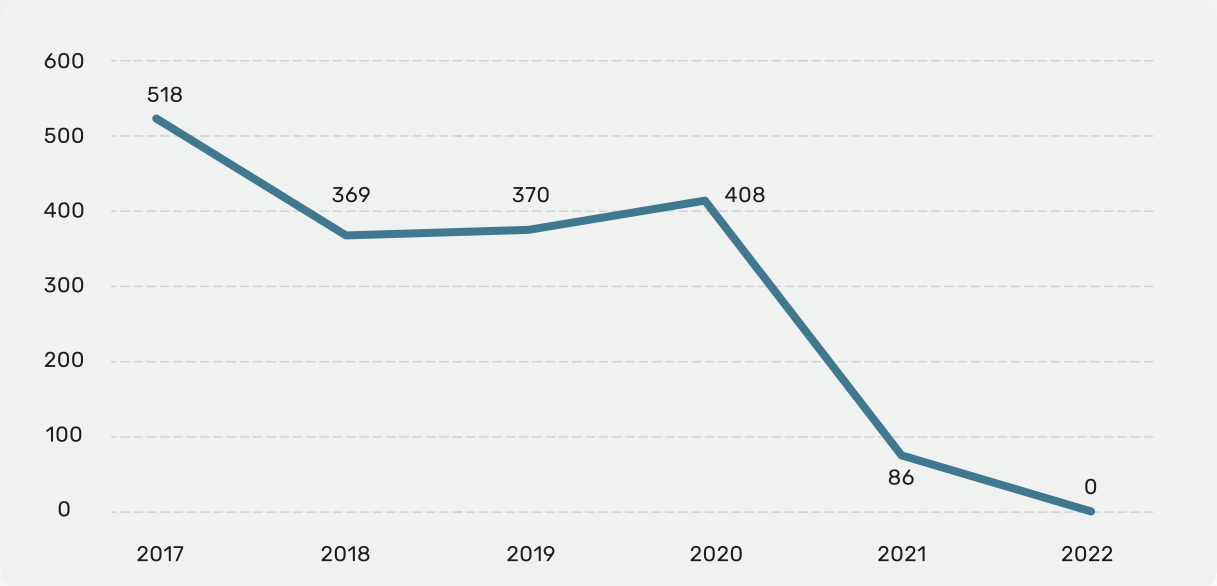
## 2. CTP Eligibility Criteria

MoSD follows certain criteria to target the families and individuals eligible for receiving assistance via the CTP; most significantly the number of family members, persons with disabilities, family members if children included, female-headed households, type and nature of housing, house property and others that make a difference in the poverty index. The statistics show that poor families in the Gaza Strip receives more disbursements than in the West Bank due to the high poverty rate in the Gaza Strip and because the number of family members in the Gaza Strip is higher than those in the West Bank.

Every Palestinian, who does not have a source of income or own property, has the right to apply for the CTP to receive assistance and attach all the documents supporting what came in his data so that the application will be referred to the social worker who will pay a field visit to the family. The household's score will be calculated and the amount due will be determined starting from 250 to 600 shekels. The households are put on waiting lists to be enrolled in the disbursement stage on funding availability.[14]

## iii. Impact of Suspension of Cash Disbursement to the Poor in Palestine

This year, MoSD did not disburse the CTP dues to the beneficiaries while last year the Ministry exceptionally disbursed one payment under the CTP to all the poor families, who received a reduced amount of 750 ILS, constituting only 14% of the annual payments. According to PCHR's follow-up, in 2019 and 2020, there was irregular disbursement of the CTP dues to the poor as only 75% of the payments were disbursed (3 payments per year.) the following shape shows the disbursed CTP dues to the poor families during the years from 2017 to 2022:




[14] An interview conducted by PCHR's fieldworker with Loay al-Madhoun, MoSD's Commissioner General in Southern Governorates, 22 February 2022

According to a statement by Ahmed Majdalani, Minister of Social Development, the reason for non-disbursement of CTP dues in 2021-2022 is due to the deficit in the PA's budget and after the EU cut their funds, including those allocated to the CTP for the poor families.[15] Majdalani said that EU is the largest contributor in the CTP in Palestine as it contributes up to 75% of the total CTP budges while the PA contributes up to around 25%.

PCHR monitored an increase in the suffering of the poor in Palestine due to the Palestinian government's inability to provide alternatives and solutions for covering the financial payments to the poor families, who do not have other sources to rely on in meeting their basic needs of food and clothing. Three years after irregular and non-disbursement of CTP dues to the poor, the poor families have become unable to meet their needs through short-term purchases (Indebtedness) from shops and unable to borrow from relatives, friends, and neighbors due to the deteriorating economic conditions and failing to repay their debts.

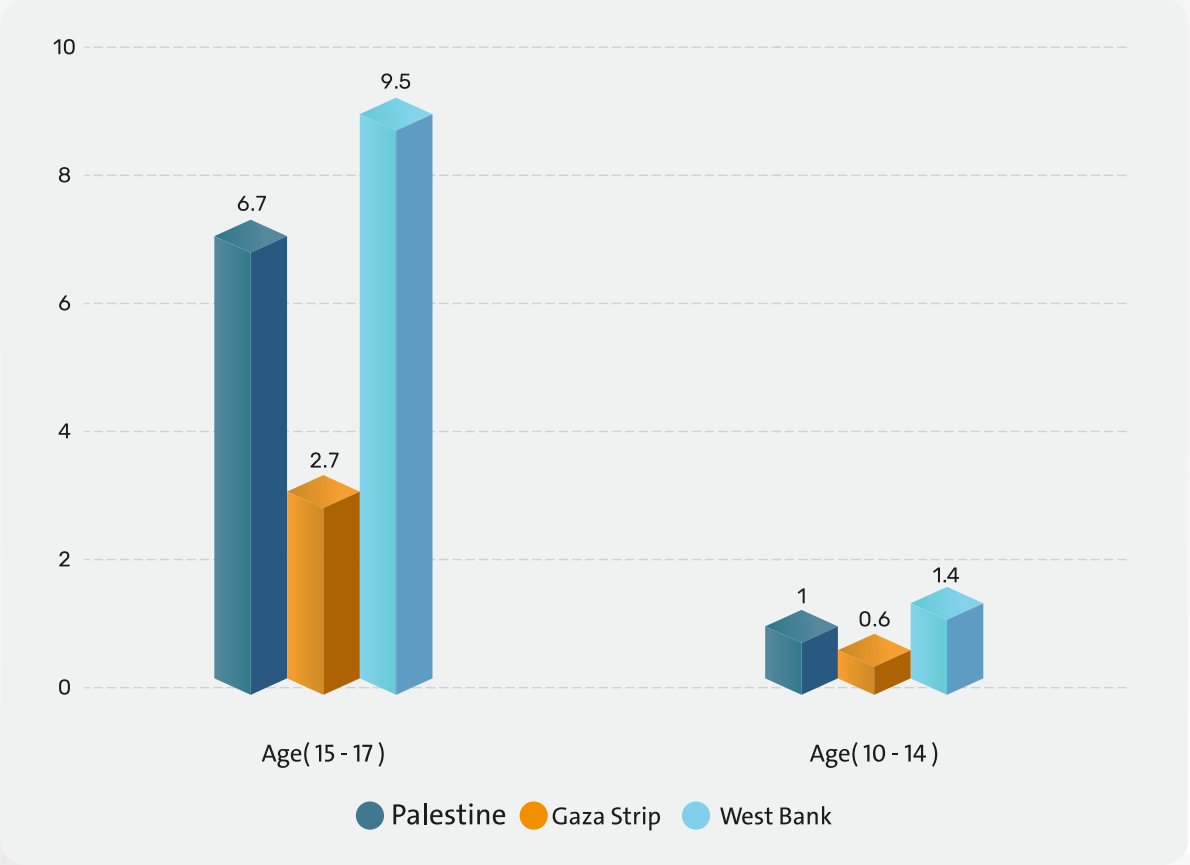
Moreover, the relief organizations and societies have become unable to cover all the poor within the little occasional assistances they provide. According to MoSD's statistics, the assistance provided to the poor families, who do not have a permanent or temporary source of income, from different sources in Palestine does not cover more than 30% of the poverty gap among the families below the deep poverty line. Moreover, in light of the non-disbursement of social affairs dues, the poverty gap coverage rate is only 8.4% for the CTP beneficiary families.

Some poor families receive assistance from relatives and donors as a form of social solidarity, which is not sustainable as it declines in times of economic crisis and tightening of the closure. Also, dire need and impoverishment obliges many families to force their children to work to help them in overcoming their hard economic circumstances; this would absolutely outgrow the social phenomena of child labor and beggary. The rate of working children aged between 15-17 years old reached 6.7% and out-of-school children up to 33.9% of the total percentage of out-of-school children.[16] This reflects the impact of the Palestinians' deteriorating economic conditions.

[15] A statement by the Palestinian Minister of Social Development on 20 October 2021: https://shms.ps/post/134304/%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D9%83%D8%B4%D9%81-%D8%A2%D8%AE%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%81-%D9%85%D8%AE%D8%B5%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%A4%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9

[16] "Child Rights in Palestine" Report, published by PCBS 2020, Labor Workforce Date Base 2019, https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_7-11-2019-LF-en.pdf

Shape (05): Working and out-of-school Children in Palestine by area and age




## • Suffering of the Most Prominent CTP Beneficiary Groups

The number of CTP beneficiary families in Palestine is 114399; 79,269 of them are from the Gaza Strip while 35,130 are from the West Bank. The following are the groups benefitting the most from CTP:

## • Elderlies

63,230 elderlies benefit from the CTP, i.e., around 23% of the Palestinian elderly population. The beneficiary elderlies are distributed as follows: 23,311 in the West Bank (36.9%) and 39,919 in the Gaza Strip (46.1%).

### • Suffering of Elderly with Cancer from Khan Younis due to Non-Disbursement of CTP Dues

(A. Y.) (62), from Khan Younis refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip, is married and supports a family of 10: including himself, his wife and 8 children. He said to PCHR's fieldworker the following:

"I live in an asbestos-roofed house comprised of 2 rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom that is built on a government land, and I have previously received many notices from the Land Authority to evacuate. I have suffered from cancer since 2019, and among my children there are 3 kids, including 13-year-old Eman, who also has cancer since 2020. I have been receiving a financial

assistance from MoSD (social affairs dues) of 1,800 shekels for 6 years divided into 4 payments per year. For 2 years, my family and I have suffered from the irregular payment of the social affairs dues; the last payment of around 750 shekels was in in May 2021 that came after at least 6 months of non-payment of dues. The latter affected my ability to meet my family daily needs of food in light of my dire need to obtain the medications that are not available at the governmental hospitals. I manage my daily life with the minimum standard of living, and I rely on loans and assistance from some benefactors. I hope that the disbursement of social affairs dues will return in a steady and regular manner and that the dues will be improved in a way that guarantees a decent and dignified life for me and my family."

- **Suffering of Elderly, from Nablus, due to Non-Disbursement of CTP Dues for Poor**

(H. A.) (87) is married and lives in Nablus in the West Bank. He said to PCHR's researcher that:

"As an elderly man who had a stroke, I need special care. Also, my wife needs constant healthcare and treatment. I have been benefiting from the social affairs dues since 2000 as I receive an assistance of 750 shekels (4 payments per year). The last payment I received was 720 ILS in May 2021. Although the assistance I receive does not meet my family basic needs, I relied on it to buy medications that are not available at the stocks of the Ministry of Health. In light of the non-disbursement of the social affairs dues, debts accumulated, forcing me to ask for money from benefactors to secure food and medicine especially that I cannot work. I call on the competent authorities to disburse urgently and regularly the social affairs dues to secure a decent life for all beneficiaries."

- **Suffering of Sick Elderly Widow from Hebron due to Non-Disbursement of CTP Dues for Poor**

(T. H.) (62), a widow supporting a family of 3, including a son and 2 daughters, living in al-Tabqah area, southern Hebron in the West Bank, said to PCHR's researcher that:

"I have diabetes and suffer from high Hyperlipidemia as well as an acute otitis media "infection of the middle ear), causing loss of concentration and consciousness for certain time. I have been a CTP beneficiary for 10 years, as I receive 1200 ILS every three months. The non-disbursement of the social affairs dues worsened our living conditions, as we now only buy basic foodstuffs due to the high prices in the market and lack of money. Also, we can no longer borrow from the shops we used to take our basic needs from due to the accumulation of debts that we are unable to repay. Additionally, we cannot go to a private doctor's clinic due to lack of money, so we had to go to governmental clinics that do not offer the appropriate health service we need. Moreover, the non-disbursement of the social affairs dues has negatively affected my family's education, as my only son had to quit school to work in the construction field to support the family while my daughter had to quit her university. If the situation would remain the same, my other daughter, who is at her last year at high school, might not have the chance to go to university as well."

• **Suffering of Sick Elderly from Gaza due to Non-Disbursement of CTP Dues**

(M. A.) (62), married with 8 children, from Rafah in southern Gaza Strip, said to PCHR's researcher that:

"I suffer from difficult health problems, as I need several surgeries, including open heart surgery and eye surgery. Due to my poor economic condition and inability to obtain medicine, I have major retinal complications, causing a 90% vision impairment. I have received 1400 ILS from the MoSD every three months for 15 years. During the past two years, I fell under heavy debts due to the irregular and non-disbursement of social affairs dues, as the last payment I received was 750 ILS in May 2021. My living conditions deteriorated due to the non-disbursement of the social affairs dues, making me unable to buy foodstuffs for my family. The UNRWA food parcel helps me to meet part of my family basic needs, including foodstuffs, but it is insufficient, because I need to buy medicines. Also, I am no longer able to buy heart medications, which monthly cost me 200 ILS. I am embarrassed to seek help from my married sons, who also suffer from difficult economic conditions as they work in intermittent jobs and bear many burdens. I hope that the social affairs dues will be continuously and regularly disbursed to avoid the accumulation of debts and to be able to buy medicine and food."

## Female-Headed Families

The number of Female-headed families benefiting from CTP is 47,649 families: 19,088 from the West Bank and 28,561 from the Gaza Strip.

• **Suffering of Woman, from Jabalia Refugee Camp, Who Supports Her Family, due to Non-Disbursement of CTP Dues for Poor**

(N. S.) (36), who supports a family of 8 and lives in Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza Strip, said to PCHR's researcher that:

"My husband abandoned me 10 years ago, and I suffer from low vision. Due to our poor economic conditions, I receive 2100 ILS every month (4 payment per year) from the MoSD. Several years ago, the disbursement of MoSD dues has stalled for a whole year and then regularly re-disbursed. In 2020, I only received 3 payments while the last payment I received was 750 ILS in May 2021, and since then the disbursement has been suspended. As a result, my debts has accumulated, and I have become unable to buy the household supplies. I resorted to several charitable societies seeking for assistance. I am afraid that this situation will continue and affect my sons' performance at schools. I hope that the social affairs dues will be re-disbursed continuously and regularly along with improving the dues amount to live in a dignified life."

### • Woman, who supports sick children, suffers Due to Non-Disbursement of CTP Dues for Poor

(W. T.) (47), who supports a family of 6, including 3 sons and 3 daughters, living in Deir al-Balah, south of the Gaza Strip, said to PCHR's researcher that:

"I live with my children in a 90-sqm tinplate-roofed house. My son Saher (23), who is married with 2 children, lives with us in the same house. One of my daughters, Dina (22), suffers from epilepsy and needs constant medication. I filed for divorce against my husband, but he threatened me that he would take my children, so I dropped the case. He also refuses to pay the alimony. I have been receiving 1800 ILS every 3 months from the MoSD for 3 years; however, due to the late disbursement of the social affairs dues for nearly a year, we have been living in very difficult living conditions and we only buy the essential needs. Also, we sometimes cook on fire instead of using the oven because we cannot afford filling the gas cylinder. I had to work as a cleaner with a salary of ILS 200 per month to meet my family needs; a salary that is insufficient to meet the basic needs, forcing us to rely on what the benefactors give us. Also, my daughter Dina needs to be treated regularly at al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza, but I cannot afford the transportation fees to the hospitals . Additionally, sometimes, I buy her medication from pharmacies because it is not available in governmental hospitals, increasing my debts".

### • Suffering of a Widow, from Qalqilya, due to Non-Disbursement of CTP Dues for Poor

('A. Th.) (50), a widow living in Deir Istiya village in Qalqilya in the West Bank, said to PCHR's researcher that:

" I live with my daughter in a rundown house. In winter, our suffering increases due to water leakage that damages the furniture. I cannot repair or replace it due to my poor economic condition. Also, I suffer from rheumatism and endocrine disorder, and my daughter has Osteocampsia. I receive ILS 750 from the MoSD every 3 months and the last payment I received was ILS 750 in Ramadan. Since then, the disbursement of the social affairs dues has stalled. As a result, our living conditions deteriorated and I became unable to secure my family's basic needs, including medicine and foodstuffs. Also, my daughter suspended her study at university. I receive a food parcel from the MoSD, but it is irregular and insufficient. I hope that the amount of social affairs dues will be increased and will be disbursed continuously and regularly to live in a dignified life."

## Poor Families that Include Children

- 215,000 children from poor families benefit from the MoSD's Cash Transfer Program; around 82% in the Gaza Strip and 19% in the West Bank, constituting (9.5%) of the total number of children in Palestine and (35%) of the total number of CTP beneficiaries.

### • Suffering of Man from Jabalia Who Supports His Sick Children Due to Non- Disbursement of CTP Dues for Poor

(S. K.) (38) married with 4 children living in western al-Karama area in Jabalia, north of the Gaza Strip, said to PCHR's researcher that:

"The Land Authority notified me to evacuate my rundown house, which is established on a stated-owned land. Three of my children: Rabi'a (14), Farah (13) and Anas (8) suffer from dwarfism, and they periodically need medications and injections. I have been receiving 1200 ILS as part of the social affairs dues since 2007. In 2020, the disbursement of the dues decreased to 3 payments per year instead of 4. Over the past year, only one payment of ILS 750 was disbursed in May 2021, and during this year, we did not receive any other payments. Due to non-disbursement of the social affairs dues, I had to borrow money to provide medicines and food to my family, and I could not pay them back due to the persistent crisis. Also, I have become unable to secure food for my children, who need special nutrition to grow and repair their bodies, as well as medicines and injections needed to grow normally. Now, I collect scrape and plastic as a living and sell it to provide food for my children. I demand re-disbursement of the social affairs dues and increasing my amount to meet my family needs."

### • Suffering of Widow from Hebron Supporting a Child Who had to Drop out of School for Low-Paid Job

(F. B.) (43), a widow who supports a family of four, including a boy and 3 girls, in Hebron, said to PCHR's researcher that:

"I suffer from chronic venous insufficiency in the legs. I live in a rented house, and I am unable to pay the monthly rent due to the acclimated debt. I have been receiving ILS 750 from the MoSD for 5 years, but our financial conditions deteriorated due to the irregular and non-disbursement of the social affairs dues. We only buy essential needs, and sometimes there is no food at home, so we eat one meal of canned food all day. My 16-year-old child had to drop out of the school and work in a carwash to make a living. Also, my daughters need tuitions, and I was unable to pay most of which. I hope that my payment of the social affairs dues will increase and be disbursed continuously and regularly to live in a dignified life."

### • Suffering of Sick Man from Rafah Supporting Children Whose Educational Performance Deteriorated

(E. M.) (51), married and supporting a family of 6, including 3 boys and 3 girls, lives in Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, and said to PCHR's researcher that:

"I suffer from irritable bowel syndrome and my wife suffers from chronic hypertension. I support my sick brother who lives with me in the same house. I have been receiving ILS 1800 from the MoSD since 2011, and in 2016, this amount was decreased to ILS 1450. Last year, I received only one payment of ILS 750. Heavy debts accumulated due to the non-disbursement of the social affairs dues and I can no longer borrow money to meet the minimum needs of my family, including medicine and food. Due to this, my health condition deteriorated as I could not be able to go to doctors in private clinics. Also, my sons' educational performance deteriorated and I had to postpone several semesters for one of my sons because I cannot pay the university tuitions. Recently, I headed to several charitable associations to get any assistance after long period of non-disbursement of my social affairs dues. I hope that my payment of social affairs dues will be increased and disbursed continuously and regularly to live in a dignified life."

## Persons With Disabilities

- (48,263) persons with disabilities are among the beneficiaries of MoSD Cash Transfer Program, constituting (8%) of the total number of beneficiaries, whereas the number of families headed by persons with disabilities is 18,177, constituting (16%) of the total number of beneficiary families: 9,865 families in the Gaza Strip and 8,612 families in the West Bank.

### • Suffering of Man from Salfit Who Supports Child with Disability

'Abed al-Kareem Hasan Khader Molawah (58), married with 7 children and living in Deir Istiya village in Salfit, north of the West Bank, said to PCHR's researcher that:

"I live with my brothers in the family house, and one of my sons (19) suffers from mental and physical disability, who harms others when he gets angry. He needs special medication to control his behavior that is not available at the Ministry of Health, so I buy it from my own money from the pharmacy. I have been receiving ILS 1800 every 3 month (4 payments per year) from the MoSD for 10 years. However, I was deprived of the disbursement of the social affairs dues years ago for having sheep for trade. When I sold the sheep, I submitted a new application to repay me the social affairs dues and the MoSD approved. In 2020, I received 3 payments, and the last payment I received was ILS 750 last year. The late disbursement of the dues accumulated heavy debts on me, and I can barely provide food for my family as I do not have any other source of income and do not receive any assistances from any organizations. I hope that the amount of social affairs dues will be increased and disbursed continuously and regularly to live in a dignified life, especially in light of the high cost of living."

### • Suffering of Man with Disability, from al-Bureij Refugee camp, Due to Non-Disbursement of CTP Dues for Poor

(W. M.) (42), married and supporting 9 persons in al-Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza Strip, said to PCHR's researcher that:

"I have a lower limb disability due to an old accident. I live in a 60-sqaure-meter apartment roofed with tinplate above my family residential building. Because of my health condition, I have been receiving ILS 1500 (4 payments per year) from the MoSD for 15 years. During the past two years, the MoSD decreased the payments to 3 per year. In 2021, all beneficiaries received one payment of ILS 750. I have lived in harsh living condition since the non-disbursement of the social affairs dues and due to the accumulated debts, rendering me unable to meet my family needs. I rely on assistances provided by persons with disabilities associations and on the food parcel I receive from UNRWA."

### • Suffering of Man, from Rafah, Who Supports His Sick Children, Including one with Disability

('A. 'A.) ( 46), married and supporting a family of 10, including 7 boys and 3 girls, in Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, said to PCHR's researcher:

"Four of my sons have thalassemia, including Mohammad who also has hearing impairment. They need blood units every 20 days. My son Osama had his finger amputated in the Great March of Return protests in the Gaza Strip. I receive ILS 1800 from the MoSD, but due to the non-disbursement of the social affairs dues almost a year ago, our living condition deteriorated and we have only relied on the UNRWA food parcel. With regard to health condition, my sons need regular blood transfusions, and I can barely secure the transportation costs to reach the hospital. Also, I cannot afford my son's school expenses and stationery. Moreover, my son Osama receives a salary after being wounded in the Great March of Return protests, and he helps me to secure the family needs. I demand the re-disbursement of the social affairs dues as soon as possible to be able to meet our minimum needs."

## iv. Social Protection for the Poor under the Palestinian Law

The lack of a clear view by the Palestinian Authority in terms of social protection for the poor in Palestine is highly problematic and affects the Palestinian vulnerable groups, as poor people were left alone facing a difficult destiny. They receive irregular and unstable relief assistance, while the Palestinian laws have promoted social protection for employees through the pension and social security funds. In the absence of national plans for combating poverty, according to the initial report submitted by the State of Palestine to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) , the poverty cycle continues to expand as governmental policies and programs only seek to reduce the impact of poverty among families and individuals through relief programs instead of finding solutions to combat poverty in Palestine.

Although the Palestinian Laws failed to solve the poverty crisis, some laws that have been enacted to support vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, children and women, provide a kind of social protection binding to the Palestinian government and they are as follows:

- **The Palestinian Basic Law:**

**Article (22) stipulates that:**

1. Social, health, disability, and retirement insurance shall be regulated by law.
2. The welfare of families of martyrs', prisoners of war, the injured, and the disabled, shall be regulated by law. The National Authority shall guarantee them education services, health, and social insurance .[18]

**The 1999 Palestinian Disability Law No. (4):**

Article (2) stipulates that: any person with disability has the right to enjoy honorable and decent life and to benefit from the variant services

**The 2004 Palestinian Child Law No. (7) and its amendments:**

**Article (29) stipulates that:**

1. the child is entitled to maintenance, including provision of food, clothing, housing, healthcare, and education.
2. The father or guardian of the child is obliged to cover the cost of maintaining the child.
3. The state shall take all measures to guarantee this right. [19]

The deprivation of poor families in Palestine, especially the CTP beneficiaries, of their dues is in violation of the Palestinian Basic Law and is a clear and flagrant violation of the right of the poor people, their families and children to a dignified life.

[18] The 1999 Palestinian Disability Law No. (4) and its amendments, link: http://muqtafi.birzeit.edu/pg/getleg.asp?id=13211
[19] The 2004 Palestinian Child Law No. (7) of and its amendments, link:http://muqtafi.birzeit.edu/pg/getleg.asp?id=14674

In light of the above, laws shall be enacted to ensure protection of poor people and to exclude them from any austerity measures so that the vulnerable and poor groups, especially the CTP beneficiaries, can protect and maintain their families. Also, the Palestinian government should work to provide alternatives to support CTP and ensure its continuity without any suspension, as it is mainly funded by international donor.

## v. Social Protection for the Poor under International Laws

Poverty has been viewed in a broader sense by the human rights perspective that includes poor living conditions, unhealthy housing, inadequate education, marginalization, unemployment, and poor health conditions. This proves as well that human rights are indivisible and interdependent. Many international conventions have codified the importance of combating poverty and ensuring a decent life for a human being by guaranteeing the equitable distribution of wealth among individuals and adopting purposeful steps to improve and develop human life. The Following are the most important conventions that explicitly or implicitly stipulate combating poverty and which Palestine has acceded to:

### 1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights [20]

**Article (22) stipulates that:** "Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality."
Article (25) stipulates that: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."

### 2. Convention on the Rights of the Child[21]

**Article 24 (2-c) stipulates that:** "To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution."

**Article 26 (2) stipulates that:** "The benefits should, where appropriate, be granted, taking into account the resources and the circumstances of the child and persons having responsibility for the maintenance of the child, as well as any other consideration relevant to an application for benefits made by or on behalf of the child."

[20] Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations by its resolution No. 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948.
[21] Convention on the Rights of the Child: Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations by Resolution No. 44/25 of 20 November1989, and it came into force on 02 September 1990, according to Article 49.

## 3. Declaration on Progress and Social Development[22]

Article (10) stipulates that:

1. "The elimination of hunger and malnutrition and the guarantee of the right to proper nutrition."
2. "The elimination of poverty; the assurance of a steady improvement in levels of living and of a just and equitable distribution of income."

Article (11) stipulates that: "The provision of comprehensive social security schemes and social welfare services; the establishment and improvement of social security and insurance schemes for all persons who, because of illness, disability or old age, are temporarily or permanently unable to earn a living, with a view to ensuring a proper standard of living for such persons and for their families and dependents."

Moreover, the Declaration on Progress and Social Development affirms adoption of social and economic measures aiming at redistribution of property and income among all individuals in the society to secure equal rights to property for all people.

## 4. The Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition[23]

This Declaration is one of the most important international instruments on combating poverty, hunger and malnutrition, and the following are the most important articles of this declaration:

1. Every man, woman and child have the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop fully and maintain their physical and mental faculties. Society today already possesses sufficient resources, organizational ability, and technology and hence the competence to achieve this objective. Accordingly, the eradication of hunger is a common objective of all the countries of the international community, especially of the developed countries and others in a position to help.

2. It is a fundamental responsibility of Governments to work together for higher food production and a more equitable and efficient distribution of food between countries and within countries. Governments should initiate immediately a greater concerted attack on chronic malnutrition and deficiency diseases among the vulnerable and lower income groups.

3. It is a responsibility of each State concerned, in accordance with its sovereign judgement and internal legislation, to remove the obstacles to food production and to provide proper incentives to agricultural producers.

[22] Declaration on Progress and Social Development: Adopted by the General Assembly of United Nations by its resolution 2542 (XXIV) of 11 December 1969.

[23] The Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition was adopted on 16 November 1974, by governments who attended the 1974 World Food Conference that was convened under General Assembly resolution 3180 (XXVIII) of 17 December 1973. It was later endorsed by General Assembly resolu tion 3348 (XXIX), of 17 December 1974.

## 5. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Article 28 (2) stipulates that: "States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to social protection and to the enjoyment of that right without discrimination on the basis of disability, and shall take appropriate steps to safeguard and promote the realization of this right, including measures:

a. To ensure equal access by persons with disabilities to clean water services, and to ensure access to appropriate and affordable services, devices and other assistance for disability-related needs.
b. To ensure access by persons with disabilities, in particular women and girls with disabilities and older persons with disabilities, to social protection programmes and poverty reduction programmes.
c. o ensure access by persons with disabilities and their families living in situations of poverty to assistance from the State with disability-related expenses, including adequate training, counselling, financial assistance and respite care.
d.

## 6. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights[24]

The Covenant provides a set of rights that aim to ensure a decent life for all individuals without discrimination.

Article (9) stipulates that: "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance."

Article (11) stipulates that: "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent."

Thus, the State of Palestine has several obligations following its accession to international conventions; most prominently the use of its maximum available resources to realize incrementally economic and social rights and to ensure individuals' right to social protection and decent livelihoods. To achieve this, the Palestinian government shall align national laws to comply with conventions and treaties signed by the Palestinian Authority. This includes the

[24] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (GA) on 16 December 1966 through GA. Resolution 2200A (XXI), and came in force from 3 January 1976.

adoption of new policies to enact laws binding the Palestinian governments to adopt more regular and constant programs that guarantee a decent livelihood for the poor and cover the expenses of the most vulnerable groups such as patients, persons with disabilities, women, children, and other citizens who live in exceptional circumstances that prevent them from working.

It is worth noting that following Palestine's accession to human rights treaties, the Constitutional Court issued an interpretative resolution (5/2017) on 12 March 2018, to determine the nature of the relationship between international law, especially human rights agreements, and Palestinian domestic law. The resolution clarifies the form of the legal system hierarchy applied in Palestine, as the Palestinian Declaration of Independence must be on the highest level of the pyramid, followed by the Basic Law, and then international treaties and agreements with finally national laws and legislations, provided that the agreements and treaties should meet the formal requirements for having the power of law.

It is worth recalling that the Palestinian government has worked with all partners at the local and international levels to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its mantra: "Leave No One Behind'. The first goal of sustainable development is to "eradicate extreme poverty for all people wherever they are" by 2030, while the second goal is to reduce the percentage of poor by at least half according to national definitions.

It should be noted that Palestine is one of the least developed countries, according to United Nations General Assembly resolution 43/178 of 1988, which has reached to the conclusion that it is difficult to make sustainable development in favor of Palestinian people under the occupation.

Consequently, the root cause of poverty is the Israeli occupation and its policies aimed at plundering Palestinian natural resources and settlement expansion, and the consequent practices that impede the Palestinian people's enjoyment of the rights needed to eradicate poverty, such as the right to self-determination, sustainable development, the right to movement, and the right to life.

## vi. Recommendations

The non-disbursement of CTP dues for poor has unprecedentedly deteriorated their living condition. In light of its concern over the deteriorating economic and social rights of poor families, including those enrolled in the "Cash Transfer Program", due to the lack of alternatives that protect the poor who have no other source of income to rely on and cannot meet their needs of food and clothing, PCHR:

- Calls on the Palestinian government to align Palestinian laws to comply with conventions and treaties signed by the Palestinian Authority. This includes the adoption of new policies that enact laws binding Palestinian government to provide social protection for poor.

- Calls on the Palestinian government to take measures aimed at combating the poverty in Palestine, as it affects a set of human rights, in particular economic, social, and cultural rights.

- Calls on the Palestinian government to disburse immediately the social affairs dues to the beneficiaries, including the accumulated dues.

- Calls upon the Palestinian government to fully adhere to fixed disbursement dates every three months as decided by the MoSD and known for all beneficiaries.

- Calls on the MoSD to increase the number of beneficiaries of the social affairs program and emergency aid in the Gaza Strip due to the high rates of poverty in order to ensure that citizens are protected and live a decent life.

- Calls for a reassessment of the payments allocated to poor families, in order to be commensurate with the high cost of living and the rising commodity prices.

- Calls for the localization of CTP through its inclusion in the Palestinian Government's annual general budget and not depending on funds from donors.

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